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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: RUSSIAN FM LAVROV DISCUSSES KOSOVO, NATO WITH MONTENEGRO

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED - PLEASE HANDLE ACCORDINGLY.

1.(SBU) SUMMARY: Russian FM Lavrov made no commitments on a possible Russian veto of a Kosovo UNSC resolution in meetings April 20 with the Government of Montenegro. The GoM would prefer that the EU "speak with a unified voice, with a single position" on Kosovo -- and the GoM will join the EU position, regardless whether that position is for or against the Ahtisaari plan. The GoM believes a Russian veto would have serious negative consequences for the region, and would prefer a three-to-six month delay if needed to avoid a veto. Lavrov said Russia had "no objections" to Montenegro seeking NATO membership. End summary.

FM Lavrov - No Signals For, Against Veto on Kosovo

¶2. (SBU) MFA acting State Secretary Vladimir Radulovic told poloff April 24 that in his meetings with the GoM April 20, FM Lavrov indicated "neither a 'yes' nor a 'no'" as to whether the GoR would veto a UNSC resolution on Kosovo. Lavrov did express concern that any Kosovo resolution would be a precedent for other situations, if only a precedent in fact and not law.

¶3. (SBU) Radulovic said the GoM message to the GoR and USG was the same on Kosovo. The GoM did not believe the situation could be "prolonged endlessly,' that a resolution was needed. Preferably, that solution would be acceptable to both Belgrade and Pristina, said Radulovic, but as that was not the case, the GoM supported that the decision was in the hands of the UNSC. A Russian veto, however, would have "negative consequences" for the region including Montenegro, Radulovic citing refugee flows and potential violence in Kosovo. Even though it prefers a rapid resolution, the GoM could tolerate a three-to-six month delay in reaching a UNSC resolution, if the time was needed to avoid a Russian veto, added Radulovic.

¶4. (U) Radulovic dismissed as "ridiculous" an opposition suggestion that the GoM support the GoS position on Kosovo.

Rather, the GoM will advance "European values", which he said were increasingly Montenegrin values. He dismissed the possibility that Montenegro could influence the Kosovo decision. Consequently, the GoM was looking for a unified EU position on the Ahtisaari plan, which they would adopt and support. Radulovic said the exact position, for or against, was less significant than the unanimity of the EU states. He said that this followed from the GoM foreign policy priorities, which he said were "stability, peace, and prosperity in the region," combined with the GoM goals of European and Euro-Atlantic integration.

NATO

¶5. (U) FM Lavrov told the GoM that Russia "understands Montenegro NATO aspirations," said Radulovic. Lavrov observed that for Montenegro and the western Balkans, NATO membership was a factor in internal and regional stability, a contributor to economic development and democracy. Radulovic said Lavrov observed that NATO membership was additionally a route by which the region could avoid repeating the history of the past 15 or even 100 years.

Radulovic said Lavrov therefore had "no objections" to Montenegro's desire to join NATO.

BARNES